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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/27/2014  
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SUBJECT: NEW ECONOMY MINISTER PRAISES PRIVATE SECTOR

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

11. (C) Ambassador called on Sheikha Lubna Al-Qasimi, the New Minister of Economy and Planning, on November 27 to congratulate her on assuming her role as the first UAE woman cabinet member. Sheikha Lubna commented that, in her view, the cabinet shake up reflected the UAEG's effort to bring in private sector blood into the government, noting that she and the new ministers of Communications and Energy had all come from the private sector. The fact that UAE President Zayed had appointed her (in one of his last official actions) was especially important to her.

12. (C) Sheikha Lubna noted that she thought the role of government was to make good regulations to empower the private sector.<sup>8</sup> Sheikha Lubna said that she remains on the board of Thunderbird School of Management and a member of the American Business Council, although she will step down from her active role as CEO of Tegairi.com, an online business-to-business market place. Her ministry's focus would be to ensure that the UAE is ready to face the challenge of globalization. In fact, her first ministerial visit will be to Doha December 5-6 to participate in a G-77 conference on trade and investment issues.

13. (SBU) Ambassador and Sheikha Lubna discussed the UAEG's proposal to send a working level team to Washington to meet with key business and Congressional leaders on UAE's desire to pursue an FTA with the United States. In Sheikha Lubna's view, the UAEG needed to reach out aggressively to the USG and also to its own business community on the FTA. She noted that the UAE Agencies Law was a sensitive issue for the UAEG,

adding that some of the established local agents would be opposed to any change. She suggested that the USG look at a transition period for established agency agreements and not push to resolve this issue in the first negotiating round. Ambassador also briefed the Minister on the Arab League Boycott case of Netafim USA and emphasized that this was an issue that needed to be solved.

14. (C) Comment: Sheikha Lubna will be an excellent addition to the UAEG cabinet. She has an aggressively pro-free market/pro-free trade view, as well as a close working relationship with the US mission. Her first official actions have been to issue decrees setting up the new &International Real Estate Development Company,<sup>8</sup> a private joint stock company, and the new &Arab Technical Construction Company,<sup>8</sup> a public joint stock company on November 27. End Comment.

SISON